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The Will of The Gods

A Semi-Historical Drama of Mysticism and Romance Love and Conquest in Five Acts

By PAUL CAMMANS

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THE

WILL OF THE GODS

A

SEMI-HISTORICAL DRAMA

OF

Mysticism and Romance

Love and Conquest

IN FIVE ACTS

BY

Paul Cammans

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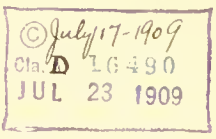

PREFACE

The following work is an attempt, however feeble, to show, through the medium of the stage, the eternal fitness of things, in a world where not only kings and queens, but every creature under the sun is "the right man in the right place."

And as the Law of Reincarnation and Karma, more nearly than any other philosophy, answers the why and wherefore of things just as they are, I have used that doctrine as the central idea of the story, the teaching of Reincarnation, being merely the ordinary view of Life enlarged, that in the end merit wins out and that he gets the place who best fits himself for the position.

And to those who think the Divine Right of kings but an empty phrase, I would say that in the exact proportion as this romance establishes that verity it proves in the precise ratio the Divine Right inherent in every creature to mold his own career and to shape his own destiny by fitting himself for greater things, simply by being faithful to the lesser duties imposed, or, to use the words of Illano:

"I but said, my Royal Mistress, that men's circumstances ever correspond to their attainments, and as certain circumstances attend every birth, it therefore follows of a certainty that these circumstances, whether as prince or pauper, must needs be the result of attainments in previous lives, for the gods are no respecters of persons, and love all creatures alike. And as a boy at school chooseth not his own desk, but is appointed his place by the teacher in charge, and as his own efforts only gain for him the head of his class, so do the gods ever put men in their appointed places, though their inherent fitness and deserts determines their station."

Sincerely trusting that this attempt has not been entirely in vain, I lovingly dedicate this work to the children of men!

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTORY

After the Crusades to the Holy Land, which extended over a period of nearly four centuries, beginning about the year 1092, and which were conducted for the purpose of wresting from what were then known as the Infidels, or followers of Mahomed, the Holy Sepulchre, but especially after the Treaty of Peace between the then leader of the Crusades, King Richard I. of England and Saladin, Soldan of Arabia and King of Palestine, great multitudes of European people containing the chivalry of England, Scotland, France, Spain, Italy, Austria and Scandinavia, settled permanently around and about the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, establishing small kingdoms and principalities, which, by the way, fought each other most cheerfully, and most of which were tributary to the larger kingdoms, such as Egypt, Assyria, Abyssinia, Arabia, Macedonia and Turkey, which caused a peculiar mixture of the races and religions, and although the religions remain, these smaller kingdoms and principalities have ere now practically disappeared.

And it is with one of these smaller kingdoms, situated on the Northeasternmost fork of the River Nile, and which I have given the fictitious name of Friesland (pronounce Freesland) that our story deals.

The people were mostly of English and Scotch descent, and spoke the language then common in England, besides another language called the Lingua Franka, which was used by all the nations for purposes of intercommunication, but which I have not attempted to imitate. The time is about the year 1500 Anno Domini.

The first act opens with the banquet hall of the Royal Palace of Mansourah, situated on the River Nile. Cedric of Arnheim, chamberlain to King Richard of Friesland, and the Lady Gloria, lady in waiting to the Queen Sylvania, Princess Royal of the House of Batavia, are momentarily expecting the wedding party just returning from the marriage ceremony. After they return, they enter into an unfortunate altercation about some words dropped by the officiating Priest, Illano, who is an Egyptian Initiate, and who has been the tutor of the King since early boyhood, to the effect that all life is but a continuous journey towards the Goal, a journey in which personal effort alone counts, the Queen holding that all is but the chances of fate.

PROGRAM

OF

THE WILL OF THE GODS

A SEMI-HISTORICAL DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

THE CAST.

Richard I.....Majesty of Friesland (pronounce Freesland)
Sylvania, Princess Royal of Batavia.....His Queen
Cedric of Arnheim.....The King's Chamberlain
The Lady Gloria.....Lady in waiting to the Queen
Illano.....Egyptian Initiate and Tutor to the King
Bartholdy.....Brother to the King, who would like the Throne
Saladin.....Soldan of Arabia and King of Palestine
Hassan.....Envoy of the Soldan
Bildad.....Premier of Arabia
Omar.....Grand Vizier
Abdallah.....Lord of the Treasury
Capillo—Aspeth.....Knights of the Court of Richard
Dana.....The Embalmer and Spokesman of the Citizens
Courtiers, Ladies in Waiting, Pages, Soldiers, Messengers, Nubian Slaves, Arabian Horsemen, etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.

Banquet hall of the Royal Palace of the city of Mansourah, capital of Friesland, on the River Nile.

"This day I lose both my people and my Queen!"

ACT II.—One week later.

Royal hunting encampment of the Soldan of Arabia, near the Lybian desert.

"The River Nile in bondage."

ACT III.—Thirty days later.

Throne room of the Palace at Mansourah.

"The Queen's message!"

ACT IV.—Two weeks have passed.

The Palace garden in three scenes. Time between first and second scene, 60 days; third scene, the next morning.

Scene 1—The defeat of the Envoy!

Scene 2—"The Nile will overflow no more!"

Scene 3—"Tell your children we will pay the price to have been born a Queen."

ACT V.—One month later.

The square of the statue of Isis at Mansourah.

Triumphal entry of the son of the Soldan.

"Only Allah is Great!"

ACT I.

Cedric and Gloria directing the preparations for the banquet, banquet table already set, and putting on the last touches, while maids and pages are busy.

Cedric—And when do we follow the good example set us this day by the King, my Gloria, and enter into that state of everlasting bliss man well calls marriage (takes her hand), for what could be merrier than to be the husband of so good and beautiful a maid as thine own sweet self?

Gloria (withdraws hand)—Thou speakest as one having much experience, my Lord Cedric. Nay, I will have none of such.

Cedric—I need but look at thee, my love, to know naught could be more blissful than to be wedded to thee. Come, sweet, when shall it be? I am past 22 and thou wilt soon be 18. Dost mean to be a spinster all thy life?

Gloria (smiling)—I will yet wait a while before I tell thee, and first ask the Queen if marriage be to her liking. But, oh! Cedric, here they come.

Enter wedding party, laughing and talking.

Cedric and Gloria bow low to all and show them their places at the table. When all seated and arranged.

Cedric—My Royal Master, and Regal Mistress, let mine be the first voice to bid welcome to new Majesty of Friesland. All hail to our Queen, and may her reign prove as happy as her beauty gives happiness. And (throwing down his gauntlet) I here challenge any chevalier to meet me in single combat, on horse or foot, with sword or lance, be he Prince or King or belted Knight, who dares maintain me to the contrary, that her's be not the brightest beauty in Christendom.

(Great cheers, welcome to the Queen and hail to the Queen.)

Queen—We thank ye, lords and ladies; your Queen thanks ye for loyal hearts and gallant speech.

King (to page)—Henry, the wine! (Page pours wine and hands it to the King.) And now, by Saint George, my Lord of Arnheim, thou shalt see beauty can reward as well as inspire brave words and doughty deeds. My Lady Gloria, with thine own hands and in this pleasant company, thou shalt pin thy colors on the breast of thy Knight, and proffer him this cup in token of our royal esteem.

Gloria (hesitatingly)—Your Majesty, 'twould not be meet.

King (encouragingly)—Come, come, thou minx; beauty should ever count it an honor to serve a stout heart and willing hand, and methinks thou wouldst not need overmuch coaxing were the company less numerous, eh? Out with thee, my beauty!

Gloria obeys, makes profound curtsey, then offers cup. All clap hands and cry "Bravo, bravo, well done," etc.

Cedric (sinking on one knee and raising cup)—To the Lady Gloria, allegiance forever, and may the foul fiend take him who shall drag her colors in the dust!

King (all cups have been filled by pages)—Bravo, my Lord of Arnheim, and here is to our Queen, the choice of our heart, and the strength of our arm.

All drink and cheer, "Long live the Queen." Queen bows several times.

King—And that posterity shall not count us ungrateful for a gift so wondrous as thyself, my heart, we too shall give in our turn to the poor of our country. Illano, my tutor and treasurer in one, let 20,000 guilders be distributed among the poor of the city. (Illano bows, King

turning to Queen.) Does this meet with thy favor, my Royal Spouse?

Queen—Indeed, yes, my Lord, for though thou gavest away everything of which I fear there is grave danger, for thou wert ever generous, yet would I still have thee!

Illano—Wise indeed is he, my children, who chooseth good rather than evil, for I will repay, sayeth Isvarah, which included both the right and the wrong, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye reap again, though ye be a Prince or a pauper by circumstance, for one's circumstances ever correspond to one's attainments, yet who is the greater, the Prince or the pauper, for a pauper may save the nation, while a King may lead it to destruction. But I must now beg my leave of you, my Lord and Queen, and attend to matters of state, as my Royal Master may perchance have more pleasant things to occupy his time these festal days.

Queen (kindly)—Nay, tarry, good friend, for thou speakest a strange doctrine in mine ears. Dost mean my Royal lover and King, who made me this day his Queen, at the displeasure of my father, the King of Batavia, owes his exalted position to his own attainments and not the kindness of fate? Nay, this I believe not, even though it fall from thy lips.

Illano—I but said, my Royal mistress, that man's circumstances ever correspond to their attainments, and as certain circumstances attend every birth, it therefore follows of a certainty that these circumstances, whether as Prince or pauper, must needs be the result of attainments in previous lives, for the gods are no respecters of persons and love all creatures alike. And as a boy at school chooseth not his own desk, but is appointed his place by the teacher in charge, and as his own efforts only gain for him the head of his class, so do the gods ever put men in their appointed places, though their inherent fitness and deserts determine their station.

Queen (very much interested)—This is indeed a novel doctrine that I would fain put to the test. Is any of my courtiers prepared to prove this to their Queen by leaving this court without wealth and position and reclaiming their place in the world through their own efforts alone? (None offers himself.) (Turning to the King) And what sayeth my Royal husband to this mad doctrine? (Jokingly) Art thou a King by birth, which men in my country call accident, or art thou such because of thine own kingly attributes? Eh, my liege?

King—I may not answer thee, my heart, without seeming to boast. (Laughing.) Yet did I not capture thee against the will of thine own father, the King of Batavia? (Turning serious.) Yet what the Lords of Karma, whom Illano calls the gods, have done once, they can do again. It is even as Illano sayeth.

Queen—Aye, my Lord, thou didst take me, of that there can be no doubt, but thy spoil of war was but too willing, else wouldst thou not have succeeded so readily, for there are many ways to cheat the captor. (Turning to the crowd.) But is there no man here present willing to defend the opinions of his King?

Cedric (stepping forward and saluting)—If it please thee, my queen, though my life be the price of the attempt, I count it a favor to defend the honor of my King.

Richard—Nay, nay, my brave Cedric, this is beyond even the rights of a King to accept. We would not hear of it. But have patience, my Royal sweetheart, and let us not mar this day. With ingratitude to our teacher, through unbelief in that which he knoweth

to a certainty. He will instruct thee also in this mystery of rebirth, even as he hath done this unto me.

Queen (earnestly)—Nay, my Royal husband, I may not listen to this strange teaching, unrebuked, for I, too, had **my** teachers, who taught **me** a different lesson, and rather would I put **thee**, my King and husband, to the test of thy statement, that 'twas thine own ability gained thee a Kingdom, than to listen silently to a doctrine so foolish; and as thou are a Knight, as well as a King, I bid thee go and unbeknown, retake thy throne, if thou **canst!**

Illano—'Twas never good to tempt the gods!

Cedric—Aye! This were madness, your Majesty. For me 'twere naught—but—it is but thy pleasure to joke in this matter.

Queen (seriously, but not unkindly)—Didst say joke, my brave Cedric? Thou dost not yet know they new Queen, for we joke not on matters so serious.

King (soothingly)—Thou are still young, my fairy, and wilt learn of these things presently from the wise, Illano, but if thy mind be such that it craveth open proof of hidden wisdom, and although it would but establish my safe return and no more, yet would I please thee in this matter and, single handed, recapture my **throne** and **thee**, that all doubt may be removed from thy fair head, for he's no true Knight who heeds not the wishes of his lady. But come; let us to the viands, and make merry, for the guests are waiting.

Bartholdy, brother to the King, raising his hand on stepping forward)—One moment, my Royal brother, thou wert ever somewhat of a boaster and a braggart, and if thou art my King by chance, I am thy brother by birth, and challenge thee to do this thing thou speakest of of with so much assurance. Our fair Queen is right (turning to the assembly). Let him prove this to her, for perchance he hath neither the courage to leave, nor the ability to return as King.

Gloria—For shame! my Lord Bartholdy, thou art but jealous of thy superior brother, and wouldst drive him to this mad act most willingly.

King—Peace, my Lords and Ladies! What sayeth my Queen to this, and we give our Royal word we will abide by her decision?

Queen (proudly)—My Royal lover and husband, I have the pride of a Queen, and 'twas never said of me that I fear the consequences of mine own acts, and if thou be'st so sure as thou seemest, thou mayst do this for my further assurance, as thou appearest sure enough of thyself. For if this great mystery of birth be not accident, then do I confess my ignorance of these matters. And if it be true, as thou sayest, that we are all indeed children of the Great King on high, making us all Kings and Queens, in very truth, of a lineage more Royal than any the world can boast, then would I have thee prove thy statement by going out into that world yonder, forsaking all thy Royal rights and privileges, and reclaim this thine own throne, through thine own efforts alone. (Some cry, "Let him try it, let him try it!; others, "Don't leave us, don't leave us!") Do but this for the love of thy Queen, and I will never again doubt the good Illano, though he tell me this life is but as a day at school. And while I know thee, my Liege, as a great and forceful Prince and King, else would not thy Queen have chosen thee for her Lord; for doubt not, my spouse, but a woman, if she be worthy the name, doeth her own choosing in this matter of husbands. Yet is my faith in the good Illano so **weak** and in thee, my husband, so great, that I bid thee go and prove thy statement, that it was thine own inherent fitness gained thee a throne, for if it be not true, as Illano tells me, that the Life Everlasting is the only one worth the attaining, then all

else matters not; but if it be indeed true, then would I know it, for in such case, this knowledge is worth all else in the earth. My love thou shalt always have, but I would love this supreme knowledge even more than thyself, though my capacity for loving thee would increase many fold.

And so I bid thee go, knowing that thine own innate justice perceiveth the righteousness of my cause, for no man, though he be a King may boast to his consort whether she be a Queen or not, for no true Knight may boast to his lady, and retain her respect if he make not good his boast.

And though my heart, which beats only for thee, is shrinking within me, and though I bid thee go, yet will I ever look for thy speedy return; and whether thou meetest with success or failure, yet will thy Queen, who is also a woman, ever long for her husband, until he shall be again safely within her embrace. (Suddenly breaking down, Oh, ye gods, ye gods! my heart faileth me; I cannot let thee go, I cannot let thee go!

Gloria—Illano, Illano! Stop this madness, I beseech thee! The King will do as thou advisest, for what is a Kingdom without a King, but a prey of its neighbours.

Illano—Man must ever do as he thinketh best; therefore, beware, my Lady, how thou thinkest, for as a man thinketh, so does he.

King—My sweet and gracious Queen, thou who art fairer to me than aught else upon the earth, yet it shall be even as thou wilt..

This day I leave thee free, my Queen and consort. Thou who thinkest me but a King by chance, and a braggart to boot. Even I, thy rightful King and Lord, grant thee this day thy freedom, absolute and forever.

Use thy freedom well, so that even thou, who art as regally Royal as thine Imperial husband and King, shalt be able to give a useful account of thy time on thy throne, when he shall come again unto his own, for come again I shall, my Queen, that I promise thee. All my Royal rights and powers of State I confer upon thee. I do but reserve this my good sword, which is also a cross, and my war steed, Adelbert, who loves battle better than I. We shall come again, we three, if Heaven be willing, but do not forget that in my last act to thee, I grant thee absolute freedom to choose for thyself another consort, for thou wert a woman long before thou becamest a Queen. Fare thee well, my Royal sweetheart, and the God of thy fathers be with thee, even unto the end! (Queen begins to sob; embraces her tenderly.) Queen: Don't leave me, don't leave me, king disengages himself and turns to assembly. And to you, my kinsmen and courtiers, farewell. Bow you knee once more (all kneel and uncover and bow their heads) for your liege and Lord, some of you for the last time, for all shall not be here when your rightful Lord and King shall come again; for war was ever the pastime of men. My children, good-bye! The love of a father is in my heart for you all, but it would be thus, and thus it shall be. Arise, my children.

And to thee, (turning to Illano, who remained standing) my beloved teacher and counsellor, adieu. Abide with her until the new King shall come, whether by marriage or conquest, and this thy King begs of thee, be unto her that same gracious help and guiding force, even as thou hast always been unto me. But what am I saying? I know thou wilt ever be thyself, for thy heart is of the best, and in its rightful place. Fare thee well, best of friends. Thy Royal master leaves thee his thanks and gratitude.

(King begins to strip himself of his mantle of ermine and every token and insignia of Royalty). Pages helping.

Queen(pleading in agony)—Forbear, my Royal husband! I no longer doubt thy capacity to make good thy statement, as I never doubted thy courage. Come back to thy Queen. Her heart already yearns for thee, and feels dead within her.

(King shakes his head).

Queen (turning to Illano)—For the love of thy God, Illano, let him not leave me. On my knees will I go to thee, every day of my life, and learn of thee this strange doctrine of rebirth that apparently maketh men more cruel than fate itself. Give him back to me! give him back to me! and all that I have shall be thine.

Illano—My poor child! Thou understandest me not. Even I cannot do this. Thou, thyself, art the cause of thine own misery, even as all misery is of our own making. And were I to stop him, thine own mind would ever be in doubt, for thine own nature demandeth this proof, and man ever gets what he really desires: therefore, beware what thou settest thy mind upon. (Queen puts her face in her hands). First thou didst want proof of his prowess, and proof thou shalt have. Now, thou want'st him back, and back thou shalt have him. But the gods ever hide in this thing man calls time, for it the time they take in answering that ever deceiveth the petitioner.

But be of good cheer, my child, for thy sorrow will soon be but as a tale that is told.

(The Queen falls on her knees, with head in chair; sobbing and wailing is heard on all sides. While the King is throwing down his purse, Cedric throws himself on one knee in front of the King).

Cedric (raising one hand, with head bowed)—I pray thee, my Liege, let me accompany thee on this journey back to thy throne, for what good is the King's chamberlain without a King?

King—Nay, rise good Cedric! Thou hast ever loved me, and thou art a soldier, as well as a courtier. Thou may'st go with me, but as I am thy King no longer, thou art no longer my chamberlain, but my companion in fortune.

But let us hither, ere my courage fail me, for this day I lose both my people and my Queen. Fare ye well, my children, you King that was, shall ever think of your welfare. Adieux, Adieux.

(The Lady Gloria begins to cry, and throws her kerchief at Cedric, who presses it to his lips and puts it inside his tunic. King turns once more to embrace the Queen and walks rapidly away, followed by Cedric.)

(The Queen raises her arms high and puts her face in her hands Sobbing and wailing is heard on all sides. The King is gone! The King is gone! The King is gone!)

(END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

After leaving the Palace, the King and Cedric make directly for the frontier of their country, which is joined by the territory of the Soldan of Arabia, where, on the edge of the Lybian desert, they are the means of capturing the horse of the Soldan, who is an old man, and childless, and who was carried away by the fervor of his horse while on a hunt. The scene represents the Royal encampment, the Soldan seated on a divan in front of his tent, with a Nubian slave with drawn sword on either side. Many other tents are to be seen. The Imperial Pennant floating from the flagstaff, with soldier on guard. Armed horsemen on either side on sentinel duty. A shield hanging from chain

within arm's reach on one side, and a small sun dial on pedestal on other side of Soldan, who sits in attitude of meditation.

Soldan—Oh, that I had son, like unto this valiant stranger, who tames a horse as other men handle a yearling heifer; who sits his saddle like a King, and who wields his swords with the strength of a giant, though merely in pastime. Yet Allah! the Great One, has ever been good to this old man my people call their King, but who is envious of the least among them who hath children of his own, for the greatest happiness on earth is to feel one's self immortal in the youth and beauty of one's children. But Allah is Great, and knows what is best (looking at the sun dial). But why doth he tarry this stranger, who hath captured my heart as well as my steed? * * *

Chamberlain (announcing Richard)—My Imperial Master, the stranger of the horse has obeyed thy summons and awaits thy pleasure without.

Soldan (mildly) Show him hither, at once, my Lord Chamberlain.

(Enter Richard with profound obeisance, in Arabian attire, but face white).

Soldan—Come hither, my son, that I may the more clearly see thy face, which is the face of a man, as well as a soldier. I see my Lord of the robes hath done his duty by thee, for thou dost not look ill in the dress of my people.

(Richard bows one knee in front of the Soldan, who puts his hand upon his head).

Soldan—My gratitude to thee for the capture of my horse I have already expressed, when on the edge of the desert we were parted by over-anxious servants, for what good is a man in the desert without a horse? And thou didst handle him most valiantly, for Nero, though he likes not strangers, was but as a child in thy grip, and in the pleasure of once more seeing thee in the strength of thy youth, I live over again the days of the past, when this old body of mine was not quite so feeble as it is now (bracing up). I, too, could tell thee tales of a time when there was no better swordsman in the Empire than the Soldan himself—but—tell me of thyself my young friend, for though thou speakest our language well, what country dost call thine own?

Richard—My Royal Master, I have no country, for the country I but lately called my own is mine own no more. But of this I may not speak. Yet I swear to thee, I have done naught any man need be ashamed of. I but left it of mine own free will, to please the woman of my choice. More I may not say.

Soldan—Yes, I have heard that in other countries men do these strange things for their womankind. Yet I, too, could swear, my son, that no evil blot stains thy record, for courage seldom dwells with villainy, but (thinking a moment)—wouldst make this land of the Soldan thine own? I have taken a strange fancy to thee, my lad, that passeth all understanding. In thy presence I feel not as the absolute ruler of the most glorious country upon the earth, but as I fancy a father would feel in the presence of his best beloved son. But what are thy plans for the future? Come, tell me!

Richard—To speak truly, my Lord, as yet I have no plans; but if thou couldst find me a place in thine army, though it be but that of a captain, I would serve thee faithfully.

Soldan—Oh, ho! my son! The nature of the lion will ever assert itself. Thou speakest of the rank of a captain in the Imperial Army of the Soldan of Arabia, and King of Palestine, but as a place among the lowly, yet have good men, and brave, grown grey in the service

in these times of war, when many places become vacant, without attaining to that supremacy, for know that in this country none bears the title of **commander** but the Soldan himself.

Richard—I meant not to be disrespectful, my Lord. It was but my wish to serve thee, and serve thee well!

Soldan (thinking deeply, then suddenly)—By the Great Allah in Heaven, and his prophet here on earth! I have better plans with thee than to make of thee a soldier. For the arrow flyeth straight in this land of ours, and killeth the lion as well as the wolf, though the death of a soldier be a most honorable one. But if these old eyes of mine deceive me not, thou hast the making of a statesman as well as a soldier (puts his head in his hand a moment). But this strange yearning for a son will not down. Long have I sought for one, but the avarice of men repelled me, for man ever love money and power more than his father and mother! But of thee I think otherwise. Dost think thou couldst love this old man as a **father,** for himself **alone,** and not for his Kingdom? for although Allah is Great, and loves all creatures **alike,** it is the love of a son man craveth most. What thinkest thou of this, my child!

Richard—Even as thou hast never known the love of a son, so hath the love of a father been almost a stranger to me. My earthly father died in battle when I was scarce five years old, but his memory hath remained with me, and in thee I could love that same greatness of heart, which was also in him. But thy goodness overwhelms me (covering his brow for a moment and laying his forehead upon the knee of the Soldan. Rising again)! And what will thy people say to the adoption into thy house of one of foreign blood? For I would not bring trouble upon thee!

Soldan (rising to his feet)—My son, for now I have a son at last, my people have not this strange habit of dictating to their ruler, and when they know thee for what thou art, they will love thee also, both for **my** sake and thine own. But embrace thy father, my boy, that I may feel the arms of a son about these old shoulders of mine. (The embrace follows).

Soldan (sitting down again)—And how fareth this young friend of thine? Bring him to see me, for I would **better** know the friend of my son.

Richard (smiling)—He is well, my father, and thinks thee the grandest old man 'twas ever his good fortune to meet. His very first words of thee were these: "Now, by the bright beauty of the Lady Gloria, if that be not Saladin himself, then will I cross yonder desert on foot."

Soldan—H'm! He hath a likely tongue, this youngster, but (straightening up) even these happy moments may not last, for the duties of state are ever upon me. Touch yon shield, my son for thine old father, for we have an important audience this very moment, which had almost escaped us.

(Chamberlain bows and awaits orders).

Soldan—Tell the Lord Councillors their Imperial Master awaits them. (Enter Councillors with deep obeisance and take their places, seated upon cushions, in a half circle open in front, upon the floor. Richard, standing by Soldan until all arranged, offers to withdraw).

Soldan—Nay, my son! Thy place is **here,** by the side of thy father! My Lord Councillors and friends, obeying the voice of nature within me, I have this day taken unto my bosom a son to brighten the declining days of your Soldan. And although ye know him not, he is both a soldier and a statesman, and it is my wish that henceforth he be treated

with all honor due to his rank, as the Royal Prince of your Imperial Master.

(All make profound obeisance in silence, remaining seated).

Soldan—But let us to work, that we may learn the import of this unexpected audience.

Bildad (the premier, raises his hand in greeting)—My Royal Master, greeting! These days the news of the world traveleth fast, for the flight of a pigeon is straight as an arrow, and quick as the lightning. We have but yesterday learned that the King of the Frisians hath disappeared, no one knows whither, though it is my humble opinion that he was foully murdered by his own brother, who loved him not any too well, and his throne the more! Yet it is an ill wind that blows no good to any one. For two years, through the prowess of this King, and because we have been ever at war with our neighbors, our collectors have failed to get the yearly tribute of 1,000 young men for the Imperial Army, making at present a total of 10,000 men, being a small army in itself. But now that this valiant King is no more, and as the need of replenishing our army is great, we have come to thee, our Imperial Master, to listen to thy words of wisdom, and orders. (Bows his head and remains silent).

Soldan—Nay! this is good news, indeed, my Lord Premier, for our army needeth these young men most sorely, and it still rankles in our bosom that we have not been able to collect this tribute more regularly, thanks to the good statesmanship of this dead King. And does this Royal brother of mine leave a Queen, or is he perchance a celibate? Even Kings are fools at times.

Omar (Grand Vizier, raises hand)—My Imperial Master, I greet thee. This King who, according to the strange custom of their country, is permitted but **one** wife, was but wedded the morning of his death or disappearance. But rumors of the marvelous beauty of this Queen have already reached us. They say her skin is as white as the lilies in thine own gardens; that her eyes are as blue—yes, blue, my Lord, blue—as the sky of this our own country; that her hair is the color of the pale gold of Egypt, and of a radiant lustre, and that the color of her cheek is such that men envy each other for a look of her face. But she hath **spirit,** this Queen, and may give us some trouble.

Soldan—Your Soldan counteth trouble for naught, for trouble we may not escape by shirking it. Now listen to these mine Imperial orders. As soon as an envoy becoming the greatness of your country can be dispatched, send this sweet Queen this message: That if inside of one year from this date, mind you, this date, that it has come to the ears of your Soldan, 11,000 young men are not at the disposal of our captains of war, then will the Soldan himself, at the head of his Imperial horsemen, collect this just tribute, though I lay her whole country in utter ruin (stopping a moment). But what thinketh my son of this matter?

Richard—If this tribute be rightfully thine, my father, and I doubt it not, for might was ever right, then is it thy plain duty to collect it, if thou **canst,** though it spell thine own defeat.

Soldan—Well spoken, my son and—by the beard of the prophet, thou shalt be the emissary to the court of this Queen, though thou needst not tell her thou art also my son. And harken! If after thou hast seen this houri of paradise, and wouldst make her thy wife, thou mayest make known to her these my further orders: That in case she find it difficult to produce so large a body of young men in so short a time, then can she pay this debt by becoming the rightful spouse and Queen of the only son of Saladin. What think ye, my Lords? Is it

not better to have the good will, even of a woman, than the hatred of a people?

Bildad—My Imperial Master, it is not for us to question thy wisdom, but—(very hesitatingly) dost think it were best to send a stranger on so important a journey?

Soldan (in a rage at once)—Now, by Allah in Heaven, what sayest thou? a stranger? Dost call the son of thy Soldan a stranger? Though Mahomed himself came to intercede in thy behalf, thou shalt pay for this folly with thy foolish head!

(Reaches with his arm to give the summons).

Richard (raising his hand) If it please thee, my good father, permit speech to thy son. This man knoweth **me** not, and but **thinketh** of thy welfare. He hath known thee perchance always, yet did he have the courage to take his life in his own hands, while speaking his mind, and courageous men are never over-plenty, and so I beg of thee, my father, for the life of this man, knowing that mercy is even better than justice.

Soldan (who had cooled down)—Thou art right, my son! I was over-hasty. My Lord Premier, thine Imperial Master forgives thee, for the sake of **his** son and **thy** good intention! But let us finish this business of the deputation. My Lord of the Treasury, listen well. Thou wilt make this embassy so that the like was never seen since the days of the wise King Solomon (turning to Richard); and thou, my son, thou shalt be the embassador of thine old father, and that thou wilt enhance the respect and fear in which he is held I need not say. (Turning to Abdallah) Let no treasures be spared. Take our own horses, and our 1,000 white stallions, with a lineage as long as Kings, and who but yesterday I loved as my children, but who have now taken the second place in my affections—I say, take them out of the Imperial stables, to carry the body guard of my envoy and son in one. My Lords, this audience is at an end. Do your duty, and do it well, that the son of your Soldan shall be pleased with your labors. May Allah be with you! (Councillors rise and go out backwards; after they go—)

Richard My father, may I speak to thee, of what to my mind is the best way to bring this proud Queen to terms? And this, also, I must confess: It was my own country and mine own Queen, and I would not spill the blood of my countrymen uselessly.

As thou knowest well, the country of lower Egypt depends upon the overflowing of the river Nile for its harvests. Now there is a place well known to me, but far outside the boundaries of my late country, yet well within the limits of thine, where the Nile, by cutting through a narrow strip of land, and draining the surplus into the bottomless Lake Temsa, may be diverted sufficiently to make this yearly overflow impossible, and with the labor of 100,000 slaves 'twere but the work of a season, and even while we confer with this Queen about the payment, we may gain the control of her future harvests at will. What thinkest thou of this plan, my father?

Soldan (delighted)—Ah! H'm! My old eyes and heart deceived me not, for thou art as good a statesman as thou wilt prove thyself a son. But, dost understand these matters of excavating?

Richard—I am persuaded the construction itself would prove successful, my father, when one has the control of the territory.

Soldan—So be it, then! We will dispatch orders this day to our engineers, that no time may be lost, and now, my son, a last word to thee, **not** of advice, for thy judgment is of the best, but of love and affection; and if it should be the will of Allah that I should lose my son almost as soon as found, yet will thy father ever remember this

day as the happiest in his life (leaving his seat). Embrace me once more, my boy, for to me, who have never felt the arms of a manchild about me, it seemeth good to rest this old head upon thy shoulder (rising again). And for the sake of thine old father, be cautious, my son, for treachery lurketh everywhere, and so thy father begs of thee to accept of him a gift of a body guard, which perchance thy youth and strength would spurn. Calip and Abdulf, come forward! And by the blood of Mahomed swear allegiance unto death to the son of your Soldan, whom ye have most faithfully served! (Slaves kneel down on one knee in front of Richard). My Master, I swear allegiance to thee unto death!

Curtain.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.—Another Month Has Passed.

(The Queen and Gloria are seated in conversation in the throne room of the Palace at Mansourah).

Gloria—Cheer up, my Queen, for of a surety the King will come again, and that soon, for he loves none but thee, and the love of a Knight is a sure guide to his lady. And did I not lose my Cedric?

Queen—Yes, my dear child, but it is I who have brought this misery both upon myself and thee. Thou dost not know the world so well as thy Queen, for Kingdoms are not had for the asking.

Gloria—True, my Lady, but my Royal master, the King, is not like other men. He hath a way with him, which seemingly compels even destiny to do his bidding. And think not that he would really consider losing thee, for where would he find a Queen so good and beautiful as thyself. Believe me, he is but in hiding, and is even now planning to repossess himself of thee, and through thee, of his throne.

Queen—Nay, good Gloria! Though I love to hear thee say it, he will never come by way of me. Mark my words, if he come, he come not as the suitor of a woman, but as the conqueror of a Queen!

Gloria—Aye, that were better still, my Lady, for though we women love to have our way, we love still better to be compelled against our liking. But—I hear the approach of footsteps (goes to see). (Enter Arab, with scroll, who hands it to Gloria, who hands it to the Queen).

Queen (reading)—To the mighty Queen of all the Frisians, who are as the sands of the sea, greeting: Before the sun shall have its zenith this day, a deputation of my Imperial Master, the Soldan of Arabia and King of Palestine, will wait upon thee.

(Signed) HASSAN, Imperial Envoy.

Queen—This spells new trouble, of that I feel certain. Oh, that the King were but with me! But go, my child, and bid Illano confer with thy Queen (Enter Illano, bowing, and Gloria).

Queen—Read Illano. I fear me our trouble is but beginning. What think ye of this?

Illano (reads)—'Tis easy to guess the intent of the Soldan, my Lady. He but comes to collect his yearly tribute of young men, which owing to the management of my Royal master, the King, he hath not had these ten years past.

Queen—Yes, I have heard of this tribute, for my father was likewise made to pay one to this robber Soldan. And are we in a position to concede to his demand, if that be the nature of the visit?

Illano—Nay, my Queen, the number, which by now hath reached the total of 10,000 men, would make us the easy prey of our neighbors.

But the treasury is in good condition, and we may, by making payment, defer the day of settling until the King shall be again at the head of his army. Meanwhile, we must make ready to meet the envoy becoming his station.

Queen—Yes, good Illano. Thou mayest give orders for all courtiers to assemble at once, for even now I hear the trumpet call in the distance (low fanfare of trumpets. Illano and Queen retire. Queen changes to her dress of state. Illano changes to white. Gloria remains behind. Enter Cedric, brown, and in Arabian attire. Runs up to Gloria and attempts to kiss her hand).

Gloria—Art wandering in thy mind, stranger, that thou shouldst find thyself in the Palace of the Queen, making free with strange women?

Cedric—Gloria, dost not know thy Cedric, who hath come back to thee with much good information?

Gloria (recognizing him)—H'm! My Cedric left me, thinking more of strange adventure than his lady (turning). I know thee not.

Cedric (taking hold of her arm and turning her around)—Aye, but I do know thee, and that is sufficient, for had I stayed, thou wouldst have liked me even less. But come, is this the way the most gracious maid in all Friesland, meets her lover and Knight.

Gloria—Well, then, thou mayest kiss—(Cedric presses her to his heart and kisses her mouth)—(catching her breath)—my hand!

Cedric (kisses it ardently)—But be seated, my love, as I have much to tell thee, if thou swearest by the sword of thy Knight to divulge this to no one, least of all, the Queen.

Gloria (indignant)—Dost think me a milkmaid or a scullery wench? But tell me quickly, what of the King?

Cedric—The King is safe and (looking around carefully) has become the adopted son of the Soldan, and will be here presently as the Imperial Envoy, and doubt not, but he teach this proud Queen a lesson. But I must hasten to take my place in the deputation. Good bye, bright eyes, one other kiss on thine (tries to kiss her mouth but fails) hand.

(Enter Queen in state robes, and courtiers take their places. Long blast of trumpets and announcement of the Embassy).

Chamberlain (announcing)—The Imperial Envoy of Saladin, of Arabia.

(Enter deputation when all arranged. Richard, brown, with beard, and in Arabian attire. Queen starts slightly upon hearing his voice).

Richard—To the most Royal Queen of Friesland, the fame of whose beauty is known in the four corners of the earth, my Imperial Master sends greeting and begs her to accept of these unworthy hands this string of pearls, which could ransom a Kingdom, but cannot enhance the beauty of the Queen of the Frisians. (Hands it to page to hand it to Queen. Queen looks very pleased). And it is his further pleasure that I make known to thee, these his Imperial orders: That if inside of one year from the first day of the last month 11,000 young men are not at the disposal of our captains of war, then will my Imperial Master come himself, at the head of his numberless horsemen, and collect this just tribute, though it will spell ruin to thy country. But as my Imperial Master is as kind as he is great, I am commissioned to make known to thee, these his further orders: That should ye, my most Royal Queen, find it impossible to produce so large a body of men in so short a time, then may this most just debt be paid with thyself, most gracious Majesty, by becoming the rightful spouse and Queen of the Royal Prince

and only son of my Imperial Master. (Bows his head in salutation and steps back).

Queen—We, the Queen, bid you welcome at this our abode, and though it pleases us greatly to receive the frindly visit of the generous Soldan, yet are we somewhat surprised at the tone of superiority assumed and the demand of a tribute we know nothing of, for thine Imperial Master will doubtless remember that we, the Queen of Friesland, have never entered into treaty with him, about payment or otherwise. And we, the Queen, send him this message: That for nigh on twenty years our country hath been very prosperous, and at peace with all nations. That our subjects have increased greatly in numbers, and that we have not yet lost our love for the pastime of war. That the mountains dividing our countries are as steep as ever, and that the valleys will be more impassable than the impassable mountains. That the sunlight is still as magnificent, which, together with the River Nile still assures us of harvests abundant. And (getting angry) this, also, tell thy Soldan: That we already have a husband, whom we love better than aught else upon the earth, and who is but now upon a journey, and that were it otherwise, we would not have this dark-skinned son of a matchmaking father, though he were the only man upon this continent. My Lords, your mission is ended, yet inhospitality was never our weakness, our guest chambers are always ready, and we shall be pleased to have ye abide with us until such time ye see fit to return. My Lords and Ladies, this audience is at an end.

(Everyone goes but the Queen and Bartholdy, brother to the King, and the Lady Gloria, who busies herself about the flowers).

Bartholdy—My sweet mistress, why wilt thou not listen to my words of love for thee. Give but me the right to deal with this barbarian Soldan by making me thy King and I will——

Queen—Pay this tribute. We know thee, my Lord Bartholdy. Furthermore, thou speakest treason, both against thy brother and thy King. (Aside:—'Tis strange that two branches of the same tree can be so unlike). But thou may'st do thy Queen a favor. Bid this dark-faced Envoy confer with thy Queen. (Aside: This man strangely attracts me. He hath the bearing of a King, and his voice sounds like music in mine ears.)

(Bartholdy finds Envoy and Cedric, passing the doorway).

Richard (bows politely)—We are but now on our way to the gardens, my Lord. (Offers to proceed, but Queen sees them and motions for them to enter. After they come in, enter the two Nubian slaves, armed with spears, who place themselves in far corners of the stage. Bartholdy don't see them).

Queen—Nay, if it please thee, my Lord Ambassador, we would have speech with thee. Thy Soldan hath well chosen his Envoy, for thou speakest our language most perfectly. How is it thou servest the Soldan? My Lord Bartholdy, thou may'st go. (Withdraws unwillingly).

Richard—To speak truly, your Majesty, thy language is also mine, for my mother was of thy people. But the ways of Allah are past finding out and the Soldan is both a brave man and a generous King.

Queen—But tell me of this son of thy Soldan. Why have we not heard of this son before?

Richard—As ye may know, the Soldan is no longer young, and as Allah hath not vouchsafed him a son of his own flesh, he hath but lately adopted a son, whom, however, he loves greatly.

Queen—Thy Master hath, indeed, great plans with this unknown youth, to find him a Queen as consort. But is he of noble blood, this Prince? And—does he resemble thee, somewhat?

Richard—He is no longer a boy, my Lady, and others call him a man. He is a King in his own right, and traces his lineage in a direct line to the oldest house in his dominion.

Queen—Well, we wish him no ill, but did ye say he is somewhat like thyself?

Richard (bowing)—Men have been good enough to say I am not unlike him.

Queen—It pleases us to hear thee say so, for fate plays even Queens strange tricks. But what folly am I speaking? As I told thee, I already have a husband, who will return presently to deal with thy Soldan.

(Enter Chamberlain)—A merchant waits without and begs audience of the Queen.

Queen—Let him enter, though he chooses his visit most untimely.

(Enter merchant, cap in hand; bows awkwardly)—As our caravans emerged from the desert and entered the friendly shade of the forest, I was most fortunate to find near the the fresh remains of two men, one of whom was of large proportions, the other somewhat smaller, and who had evidently been set upon by wolves, this Royal kerchief, bearing the coat-of-arms and monogram of my Queen (hands it to Gloria, who starts and hands it to Queen).

Queen (looking somewhat scared)—This is, indeed, our kerchief, and we thank thee, good stranger; but didst say 'twas found near the remains of two men. This is most strange, and did ye find naught else to establish their identity?

Merchant—Nay, my Lady, but many travelers pass that way, and may have preceded us, and I but found this kerchief half hidden in the hollow of a tree, and must have escaped their notice.

Queen—We thank thee for thy trouble; thou mayst go. (To Chamberlain) Learn his name, that we may find him. (Forgetting the company). Ye gods! it could not be the King! (Brightening up and turning to Gloria). Of a surety 'twas not the King, who kept this in his possession, for even his purse he would have nothing of. 'Twas not the King, that I would swear!

Gloria—(Bowing her head to hide a smile; hesitatingly)—'Twas I, my Lady, who gave it to Cedric, and as I was sorely in need the morning of the wedding I had taken the freedom to use one of thine, also, my Lady, and in my great happiness I threw the wrong one, your Majesty.

Queen (very sad)—In thy great happiness, thou say'st? Art mad, wench.

Gloria—Happiness, my Lady, because of the great honor conferred upon my Knight to be the companion of my King.

Queen (sits down in attitude of deep sorrow)—My punishment is come! My punishment is come!

Cedric (aside to Gloria—And mad as a Bee.) Oh! and thou didst throw the wrong one, he! And here have I loved and kissed and crushed to my heart a strange kerchief! What fools we mortals be, forsooth!

Gloria—Be not angry with me, good Cedric, but thou didst look so brave and bold, the morning of thy departure, I scarce knew what I was about * * * and (bracing up suddenly) thou didst love her so much, oh yes! and thou didst take such good care of her gift, to be sure! Thou art indeed no true knight, to loose the favor thrown by thy lady. I am ashamed of thee! (stamping her foot and turning away).

Cedric—Thou dost me cruel wrong; my life! I did but wipe the tears from mine eyes which would come because of love for thee, but (beginning to laugh) at the sight of those wolves, which devoured us,

both the king and I turned pale, and fled in all haste, yet taking time to put you kerchief carefully in my tunic, but when we were slowly being turned into wolf flesh, said I to the king, this kerchief at least I will save, and putting it tenderly in the hollow of that tree, it became the proof of my mine own death!

Gloria (smiling)—Cedric, Cedric, thou wert ever a madcap but * * * my heart bleeds for my poor lady!

Queen—Gentlemen, your hostess begs you will excuse her, as the finding of this kerchief hath given rise to dire apprehension. My Lords, the queen bids ye good day.

Gloria (walking up to the king and making the royal curtsey)—The lady Gloria bids her king welcome back into his own!

King—Nay, rise, fair Gloria, I am thy king * * * not yet. But I see thy valiant knight is better at telling wolve stories than keeping secrets from his lady. Well, he hath not misplaced his trust.

Enter Illano (Bartholdy stands at the door listening), walks up to the king and raises his hand in greeting. Illano greets his pupil and king (Batholdy raises his hand in surprise).

Richard (bows reverently)—Thy pupil greets thee, Illano, but he is thy king no more, but * * * (turning to Cedric) dost tell every passing stranger of the secrets of thy friends?

Illano—Cedric hath not spoken, my Lord, but the aura of a man changeth not with the painting of his skin. I knew thee long before thou didst enter the palace, for I have been with thee almost constantly since thy departure. Thy plan to control the Nile, should it succeed, would give the Soldan absolute sovereignty over thy territory, and did I not know both thee and the Soldan so well, I would be tempted to call it treason to thy country.

Richard (listening in surprise)—Ye know this also? But, good father Illano, it were not treason, for in the first place it was my country no more, and in the second place it was the only plan that gave promise of success, without the spilling of the blood of my children. And then granting it is still my county, it can not then be treason for the king to assure for himself the control of his own territory, for I spoke not of it, to the Soldan until I had become his adopted son and successor, making me again the ruler of mine own dominion, for thou knowest well this tribute is a just one, and that we owe allegiance to my father, the Soldan.

Illano (smiling faintly)—The pupil hath outwitted the teacher; thine argument is a good one. But be careful, my son. The road to a throne is a steep one, and I feel treachery in the air. But I must now leave thee, to look to the comfort of our guests. Good day, my liege!

King sits down to think.

Cedric (laughing and bowing to Gloria)—Fair lady, wouldst show a stranger within thy gate the gardens of the palace? We have heard much of its beauty.

Gloria (curteseying deeply)—Indeed, yes, my lord ambassador! 'Twill give us much pleasure! (Exit).

Enter Bartholdy (stealthily and looking around)—He hath ever been in my way, this brother of mine, but by hell we will end the matter, come what may.

Runs noiselessly up to the king and stabs him in the back with stilletto. Guards spear Bartholdy. The noice arouses the court and the queen and Illano and many courtiers and Arabs come running in. Queen runs up to Richard, who remains seated but leaning slightly, but is withheld by Illano.

Illano—Be not afraid, my queen, for Isvarah is everywhere, and

to the unreal there is no being, no any end of being to the real, and the truth as to these two, is perceived by those, who behold reality. See, the wound is as though it hath not been.

(Everyone starts in amazement). Queen stoops down by Bartholdy and raises him.

Richard (straightening up slowly)—Let it be given out, he was injured in a just quarrel.

Bartholdy, held by the queen, points at Richard—The envoy is the son of the Soldan * * * (falls back).

Queen (laying him down)—He is dead, he is dead!

Illano—The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind exceedingly fine.

Queen (turning to Richard)—And so thou art this mysterious son of the Soldan (bows head in acknowledgement). We regret that this unfortunate occurrance makes thy further stay impossible. And this message also take to thy father: He shall find a queen can fight, as well as a king.

Exit envoy. Servants carry body away and nearly all leave.

Queen (sits down and thinks)—And so this is his son * * * (jumping up) well, we shall defeat this imperious Soldan yet (turning to one of the courtiers) Call the commander of the bodyguard (walks up and down).

Enter Commander. Salutes.

Queen (in low tones)—My brave Asa, listen well to the words of thy queen. When this returning envoy shall be well within the domain of the Soldan capture him alive at any cost. Dost understand? Alive! That we may hold him as our hostage against the Soldan, and send him this message by two of his own people: That, if inside of ninety days we do not receive positive assurance of all cessation of hostilities he will never again behold his son. Begone, my brave captain, and do not fail me.

Illano—This were not just, my queen!

Queen—All is fair in love and war, Illano. Thy queen is now fighting both for her own freedom and that of her country.

Curtain. End of Act III.

ACT IV.—in 3 Scenes.

The palace garden, with steps and entrance to the palace on the left, and large iron gates in the rear. Another week has passed. Queen seated, Gloria standing.

Queen—What ails thee, Gloria, ever since the departure of this barbarian envoy thou hast not been thine own sweet self? (smiling). Hast thou, too, perchance, lost thy heart to this son of the desert? he? for if it were not treason to the king, I must confess he affects me strangely.

Gloria—Nay, 'tis not that, my queen, and yet it is, for I would but speak the truth if I told thee, I already adore him, * * * next to my Cedric. But he is not the man to give up without a fight, and what, should he loose his life in the struggle?

Queen—Those are the chances of war, my child. We can die but once, and a man may as well die in battle, as of disease in his own bed. Yet, let us hope for his safety, for 'twould cheat us of a valuable hostage.

Chamberlain announcing "Asa, commander of the bodyguard."

Enter commander, dusty and dirty. Salutes—My queen, we bring

good tidings. The son of the Soldan is our captive, together with most of his bodyguard and valuable horses, but he fought like a lion, and many a good man will serve their queen no more! But we greatly outnumbered him, and seeing that further resistance would mean but butchery, he gave in. He is even now in the palace.

Queen—Thy queen thanks thee, good Asa. Thou didst thy duty well. Have thy prisoner brought hither, that we may see him in the role of a captive.

Exit Asa, saluting. Enter Richard between two guards, bound and bandaged in the head, dirty and dusty. Gloria starts.

Queen (not unkindly)—Hail, to the mighty son of the Soldan! Ambition hath been the ruin of many men! Art still of a mind to make this queen thy wife, he?

Richard (proudly)—I but came in obedience to the commands of my father, to collect a just tribute. I did my duty. Naught else matters. Yet, I confess when I first saw thee, I swore none else should be my wife, and only death closes the chapter. The chapter is not yet closed for murder is not in thee.

Queen—Well, thou art at least no coward; and did I not love my husband so well, by Venus, I could love thee * * * a little.

Aye, but I hear thy husband left thee, and left thee free to choose whom thou wouldst. Am I not good enough for thee?

Queen—Thou art a man befitting any woman, my lord, but I am a queen who bows not even to the Soldan. Naught may force a woman into wedlock but the love of a man, and my heart is no longer mine to give. I am agrieved for thy sake, my friend, for thou art at least a man, but 'twas the good of my country that forced me to do this. Thy life is in the hands of thy father. Thou mayest go (turning to guards. Unbind him at once and let everything be done for his comfort, but on your life, guard him well!

Curtain.

Scene 2—Sixty days later, same as before. Gloria sits reading. Enter two courtiers.

Aspeth—Hast heard the news, Capillo? The whole country is in a ferment. For thirty days the river Nile hath been due to overflow her banks, and if she come not soon, thou knowest it means ruin to the harvest and starvation and pestilence for the people. We have had none but trouble since the king left, and I fear me, we shall never more see his face again.

Capillo—Yes, if the overflow of the Nile come not soon the harvests are ruined.

Aspeth—I am but now on my way to the queen to deliver a message from Lord Roderic, the minister of agriculture * * * (bowing to Gloria) My lady, would ye convey this document to the queen?

Hands it to Gloria, and saunters off talking.

Aspeth—It spells ruin and disease to the people!

Enter Queen and Gloria.

Queen (reads)—To my royal mistress, the queen, greeting. The conditions in the Nile valley are becoming serious. Everything is dried up and the ground is hard as baked clay. If the Nile come not soon 'twill mean the worst calamity that hath befallen this nation in two centuries. The moneys now in the treasury could but slightly alleviate the suffering. Will notify your majesty at once if change occurs. Signed. Roderic, Minister of Agriculture.

Queen to Gloria—Ah! my child, the life of a queen is not all happiness, is it? But go and send Illano to me. He is wise, and may aid us.

Enter Gloria and Illano, who reads message.

Queen—Canst not help thy queen, Illano? The people are becoming restless because of fear. Can naught be done?

Illano—Only the gods can aid us, my queen, and I am but a man. Their ways are past finding out, but their resources are infinite. Only he is defeated who gives up in despair.

Queen—Thou speakest truth, Illano. Yet, if the Nile overflow not, we shall be the easy prey of the Soldan before the coming of the new year, and the death of his son and envoy cannot aid us.

Illano—Murder never aided anyone, my queen!

Queen(almost pleadingly—Nay, 'twere not murder, Illano. We captured him fairly on his own territory.

Illano bows his head, and waves his hand in silence.

Enter Arabian messenger at the gates.

Queen—But what be this? Another messenger? It makes us feel as the ancient Job, the Jews tell of. And 'tis an Arabian. The Soldan loves his son and hath submitted to our dictation.

Gloria offers to take message but is refused. Messenger bows deeply and hands message to the queen.

Queen (reads)—Saladin begs not for the life of his son, for no man may save even the life of another at the cost of his honor, and my son shall not be ashamed of his father. But as neglect is a crime, we have left naught undone to insure us of victory. Our engineers have gained absolute control of the overflow of the Nile, and if our son, together with all his belongings, are not safely returned within the month, with positive promise of thy hand in marriage

The Nile will overflow no more!

Signed, Saladin.

Queen hands message to Illano, in a rage. Dids't hear it, Illano? Dids't hear it? 'Twas that dog of an Arab who makes even the Nile do his bidding. By Heaven, he hath outwitted me. The hound, the dog! And 'tis me he wants for his son, and 'tis only myself can save the people. . . . . But I'll not do it; I'll not do it. (I'd rather join the damned in Hell) than to stoop low to that black-faced mongrel. I'll never do it; I'll never do it!

Illano—The stars do not compel, my child, but they incline in thy favor. Thou wilt do thy duty!

Queen—Yes, by the camel-driver of Mecca, that I will. (Clasps her hands vigorously. Enter Chamberlain.)

Queen—Have the envoy brought to me, and hasten, 'ere my sense of duty (sneeringly) fail me. (Walks up and down excitedly.)

(Enter Richard, loose, but between two guards. Stands erect without bowing).

Queen—We but now received word from thy father that it is better for a brave to die than that the pride of a Soldan shall suffer. Tomorrow even', when the sun goes out into the desert thy life goes out also.

Gloria throws herself at the feet of the Queen. For the love of Heaven, forbear, my Lady—not that; not that—it is———

Richard raises his hand in commanding way. Thou meanest well, my child, but we may not save our life that way. My father is right. It is better to lose one's body than one's honor.

Queen—It grieves us that thy life should be so short. But war serves us all alike. Today it is thy turn; tomorrow it may be mine. It is the decree of fate.

Richard—Allah gives, and He takes. Allah knows best.

Illano bows his head and folds his outstretched hands across his

bosom. The Queen walks up and down. Gloria breaks down weeping.

Curtain—End of Scene II.

Scene III—The next morning, same as before (Gloria and Cedric in conversation.)

Gloria—Oh, Cedric, Cedric! we cannot let the King die at the hands of the Queen. Can naught be done to save him? Perchance we may help him to flee!

Cedric (sadly)—Alas! nay, my love, that were impossible. He is closely guarded and hath given his word! But do not despair, Gloria, dear, the day is still young and many things may come in the circling of a sun. But my heart is heavy within me, and though I love thee much, Gloria, I would take his place gladly!

Gloria (putting her arms around his neck, weeping)—I cannot bear it, Cedric; I cannot bear it. He is a most generous King and the bravest of men (has let go of Cedric and raises both arms with bowed head and crying): Mother of God, harken to one of thine own sex, and spare the King for his people!

Cedric (comforting her)—Do not weep, my love; do not weep. The Virgin Mother ever heareth the supplication of the pure in heart and none is more pure than thou. Be of good cheer, my love; be of good cheer. Here cometh Illano, he may bring good tidings. What say the stars, Illano?

Illano—The stars look bright (shaking his head), but I understand it not. Only the people can save him. Last night I caused it to be known throughout the city that it is the Soldan who controls the Nile, and that it is the Queen who can save us from disaster. But the people are slow and may come too late. Yet——what signifies this noise (walks towards the gates, raising one hand). The Gods are good; it is——the people.

(Enter deputation of citizens when all arranged. Dana, the Embalmer, spokesman of the people).

Dana—My Lord, we beg speech of the Queen! (Gloria brings Queen Queen. Cedric mingles with crowd).

Queen (sadly—on the top step)—What will ye, of your Queen?

Dana—We, the citizens of Mansourah greet their Queen, whom we love, for the sake of our King, who is no more. It hath come to our ears that it is the Soldan who holds the key to the Nile, on which the well-being and the lives of the people depends, and that it is their Queen who can save them from destruction, and for the love of thy children, yet unborn, we beseech thee to remember our children who will die by the thousands. I belong to the ancient guild of Embalmers, and know full well that pestilence ever followeth starvation. Fight we would, gladly, until we could fight no more, for cowardice is not our failing, but starvation and disease no people can fight. Our fate is in thy hands, my Queen, and the desstruction of a people will be upon thy head. Were it the King who could help us, 'twould be the King who would do it. We know we ask much, but we ask it for the sake of the women and children, and the King whom thou lovest! (Bows his head in silence.)

Queen (aside)—Oh! ye Gods; ye Gods. I cannot deny them; I cannot deny them (turning to the people). Your Queen will do what ye ask, good people. She will do it for the love of your children and the King who is no more (turning to Chamberlain). Bring hither the Envoy!

(Enter Richard, between two guards, erect and without bowing).

Queen—My Lord, a Queen's first duty is to her people. Thou

mayest start on thy journey tonight. Tell thy Soldan he hath defeated only a woman, he who could not conquer a King. My hand in marriage thou shalt have, but I swear thou shalt rue thy bargain! Now go! (Richard bows and goes.) (Turning to the people): My brave people, tell your children the Nile will flow again; we will pay the price to have been born a Queen! (Waves them away. All walk away in silence and leave Queen alone, who raises her arms, with sleeves falling to the shoulders, the full length above her head, and buries her face in her hands).

Curtain.

ACT V.

The square of the statue of Isis, in the City of Mansourah. Canopy and grandstand erected for Queen and courtiers on the left. Mechanics putting on last touches; citizens going to and fro. Aspet and Capillo strolling along.

Aspet—And so 'tis day, Capillo. The son of the Soldan makes his triumphal entry as the future King of our country. Yet 'twere but just to say, he kept faith with the Queen, for scarce had he gone ten days, when our Mother Nile again embraced her children and the people went mad with joy, and build altars for their new divinity, the Son of Saladin, whom they think almost a god come to earth, and well nigh forgot their Queen, who though of a different nation, ruined her own life, that they might live. But this hath ever been the song of the populace. The King is dead; long live the King!

Capillo—'Tis said the Queen looks more a ghost than a bride, on her way to the marriage ceremony, as she hath not slept these ten days past.

Aspet—Ah! her ladies in waiting will know a way to hide such trifles, for the pigments of Egypt and the cosmetics of Rome, were not made for naught, I warrant, and I lay thee a wager thou wilt see her more beautiful than ever before in thy life. But let us be off to the palace, to take our place in the procession!

The tune of Dixie sounds in the distance, and presently the Queen's cortege arrives and take their places in the grandstand, and arrange themselves around her in silence and whispers. When all is arranged—

Gloria—Oh! my Lady, that he would but come! If he tarrieth yet longer I shall go mad with anxiety, for though he be an Arabian, he is every fibre a King, and they do say he loves thee madly, and though the Soldan himself hath better than 200 wives, the new King ever maintains he will have but one, and that one thyself. Grieve no more, my good lady! There is yet much happiness in store for thee!

Queen—Ah! my child, thou meanest well, but happiness is not for thy Queen. We did our duty, naught else matters. These were his words.

Gloria—Hark, hark, my lady! I hear the music approaching! He cometh; he cometh!

Strains of the Star-Spangled Banner in the distance and the long procession of Arabians on horseback files past, with the music behind the scenes. Richard and the Soldan and Cedric and their staff last. Wild cheering of the populace in back ground. "All hail to the King; all hail to the King." When the Queen sees him at last, as he appeared in the first act with mantle of Ermine, she puts her hands to her head a moment and then RUNS down the steps, crying, "He hath come back; he hath come back!" (King throws himself from his horse and embraces her long and tenderly.)

Queen—Oh! Richard, Richard, thou hast come back to me. Thou

hast come back to thy Queen, but (looking scared)—what of the son of Saladin?

Richard—'Twas but myself, dear heart! But I have caused thee much grief my sweet, and much worry. Thy Richard is sorry. He will leave thee no more though it bring the joy of returning. Yet 'twas done to please thee, my love; 'twas done to please thee. Think not ill of thy husband, my bride; 'twas done for the love of thy self (laughing). Didst think the wolves had eaten us, my Queen? Nay, all the wolves in the forest could not keep thy Richard from thee. (Straightening up, the Queen cuddling close in his left arm and raising his right one). My Lords and Ladies, Richard of Friesland greets ye! (Wild cheering. The King hath come back! The King hath come back! All hail to the King; all hail to the King! Soldan dismounts.)

Richard (to Queen)—But let me present thee to my father, the Soldan, who chided me roundly when he heard how I left thee! My father dost think thy son chose well? (Queen curtesies deeply. Soldan puts his hand upon her head).

Soldan—My daughter, thy father already loves thee! Thou didst make a good fight for thy freedom.

Queen (makes the Royal courtesy)—We thank ye, my Lord; we thank ye.

King—Illano, thy King greets and thanks thee!

Illano—We bid the King welcome back into his own. Thou art indeed our King. A second time thou art placed on thine own throne. Of all men, thine has been the privilege to establish by earthly accomplishment the Divine Right to thy crown. It is the will of the Gods.

King (bows deeply and turns to Cedric)—My Lord of Arnheim, thou rogue, thou didst follow thy King into obscurity; thou shalt return with thy King in splendor. Henceforth thou shalt be known as the Vice Roy of Palestine. But get thee to thy Lady, for I swear she be dying of anxiety. (Turning to the Queen): But what think ye now, my love, did we win our kingdom fairly?

Queen (in tone of denial)—Nay, my Lord, 'twas but the Soldan, who gained thee thy throne. 'Twas **his** hand stayed the Nile, but for which thou wouldst not have been victorious.

Soldan—My daughter, 'twas thine own husband who held the Nile in bondage. All praise belongs to him!

Queen (clapping her hands in great glee)—Didst really do this, my Lord? Then 'twas thou thyself, who saved thine own life (turning to Illano): But tell us, Illano, if this great mystery of LIFE, that I, too, may know it. Mean ye we lived before we were born?

Illano—Aye, my child, many are my past incarnations and also thine, but mine I remember, while thine thou remembrest not, and as a man discardeth worn-out garments and taketh on others new, so putting off worn-out bodies, the master of the body enters new ones again, for **never** was I not, nor thou, nor these princes of men, nor shall we all, ever cease to be, in the time to come——but remember thy promise: Never again will I doubt, though ye tell me this life, is but as a day at school, for 'twas done for thy benefit and illumination.

Queen (turning to King in tones of awe)—If that be true, then thou art indeed my **great** King!

King—Didst call thy husband great, my love? Nay, nay, dear heart, call no man thus—only **The Father** is Great.

THE END.

Band plays "Hosanna in the Highest; Hosanna for Ever More."

CURTAIN.

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